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Fifty-sixth session

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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 22nd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 26 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Ms. Martensson (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Sweden)

## Contents

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

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01-60448 (E)

*In the absence of Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman), Ms. Martensson (Sweden), Vice Chairman, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/56/203, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/342-S/2001/852, A/56/453 and 488)

1. **Ms. Clarke** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that it was now globally recognized that investing in children was the best investment a Government could make. Despite progress achieved in implementing many of the goals set at the World Summit for Children, held in New York in 1990, the situation of women and children continued to be precarious. Poverty, conflict, chronic instability and disease, including HIV/AIDS, threatened to erode developmental gains in many countries. The Caribbean Community remained committed to the postponed special session on children, whose occurrence was an integral part of commitments made at the Millennium Assembly. Those commitments were as relevant as they had been before the global focus on terrorism.

2. Street children, teenage pregnancy and domestic child abuse were widespread in the Caribbean. Children were having sex as early as age 10, and teenagers in the region revealed the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS. CARICOM Governments, fully cognizant of the need to tackle those key problems, continued to allocate resources to social development. Special programmes in health and education had been devised specifically for adolescents — a particularly vulnerable group who made up the majority of the region's population. It was recognized, moreover, that adolescents would exert a profound influence on future generations, and played an important role in caring for younger siblings.

3. There was growing recognition of the need to reform the administration of juvenile justice with a view to incorporating the relevant international standards. Given that the situation differed from country to country, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was helping to carry out situational analyses in the region.

4. The Caribbean countries recognized the importance of making academic and vocational activities accessible to all young people, particularly in order to discourage them from resorting to crime and drugs. There was also a need for special community-based services to cater for the needs of young people. Given that the financial resources of Governments in the Caribbean were limited, many such services were provided by non-governmental organizations.

5. The Caribbean countries could boast successes in early education, maternal and child health, immunization and welfare. The region had also managed to avoid the extremes of child abuse witnessed in other parts of the world. However, children not attending school and those who worked or lived on the streets had been identified by UNICEF as requiring urgent attention.

6. Despite the pressing need for the international community to deal with terrorism, it was to be hoped that the goals of poverty eradication and HIV/AIDS prevention would not be sidetracked. It was also all the more urgent to address the root causes of the involvement of children in armed conflict, in particular through poverty reduction efforts, expanded educational opportunities and the involvement of young people in post-conflict reconstruction and community development. In addressing issues of sexual exploitation and child trafficking, the focus should be on improving access to quality education — especially for girls — and on providing economic support for families. The Caribbean countries endorsed the view that the private sector also had a role to play in that regard, as well as legal responsibilities in respect of international human rights standards.

7. CARICOM countries remained committed to the promotion of children's rights at the national level, as evidenced by programmes in the media and events sponsored by both Governments and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF had recommended, however, that, as part of their efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the region's Governments should seek new policy solutions to the child protection dilemmas they faced.

8. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo) said that his country reaffirmed its support for the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and renewed its commitment to implementing the related Plan of Action, adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children. His delegation hoped that the document resulting from the special session on children would take into account the interests of all children,

particularly the children of Africa, whose specific needs and situation had been highlighted at the regional preparatory meetings.

9. Although the circumstances were particularly difficult, owing to the civil war and socio-political tensions, the Congo was trying to improve the conditions of its children, the primary victims of armed conflicts, poverty, malnutrition and disease. It had established an institutional framework, including the creation of a Ministry for Social Affairs responsible for promoting activities to protect children and women, an inter-ministerial committee to support the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and an intersectoral planning and monitoring unit to collect, analyse and publish information on the situation of children. It had adopted policies designed to implement the recommendations of the World Summit for Children.

10. After years of conflict and destruction, much work had to be done to ensure the survival, protection and education of the nation's children. The conflict had seriously impaired the fight against children's diseases and access to drinking water. Before the conflict, a high proportion of children had attended school but, currently, pre-school education was almost non-existent and relatively few children received basic education.

11. With the help of United Nations specialized agencies and other humanitarian agencies, the Congo had taken measures to provide special protection for children affected by the armed conflict. The Government and international financial institutions had made the fight against poverty a priority of the interim post-conflict programme 2000-2002 and it was urgent to renegotiate the country's external debt in order to free up funds for the most vulnerable sectors.

12. **Ms. Kapalata** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation agreed that the need to complete preparatory work for the special session was all the more urgent in the context of the regrettable events of 11 September. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been translated into the national language, Kiswahili, in order to facilitate its implementation at all levels of society. A national programme of action concerning child survival, protection and development had also been elaborated, with valuable assistance from UNICEF and other bilateral donors.

13. In recognition of the fact that ignorance was more expensive than education, the Government had taken the courageous step of universalizing basic primary education. No Tanzanian child would be denied the right to education just because the parents could not afford to pay. Measures had also been introduced to encourage children to complete primary education, including special dispensations for girls who had dropped out of school for various reasons, including pregnancy.

14. A decade after the World Summit, more than 10 million children under five continued to die each year from preventable diseases and malnutrition. One hundred million children, 60 per cent of whom were girls, were still not in school. New challenges, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, had made a mockery of government efforts to deal with such problems, particularly in developing countries. Moreover, funds promised at the Summit had not been forthcoming.

15. More attention must be paid to the root causes of the involvement of children in armed conflicts. In any conflict, children remained the losers, regardless of who emerged as the winner; and the trauma they suffered extended well beyond the end of hostilities. While the previous century may have transformed the world, the basic needs of children in the majority of countries remained unmet. In the new millennium, the international community must strengthen its resolve to invest more in the younger generation and to create a world fit for children of both sexes.

16. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) said that his Government attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, since over half the population was under 25. Many of its efforts had gone into programmes to encourage the participation of children and adolescents in all areas of society and to develop the values of tolerance, freedom, democracy, justice and peace among them. It also attached great importance to their participation in the elaboration of public policies affecting them directly; accordingly, it had convened a youth forum to review the draft national policy for children and adolescents.

17. At the international level, his Government reaffirmed its desire to contribute to preparations for the special session on children. The reasons for its postponement affected the security and welfare of children in all countries suffering from terrorism. However, it was concerned that the negotiations on the draft outcome document were encountering obstacles

that undermined the achievements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. He commended the efforts of Member States, non-governmental organizations, the academic community, religious groups and the media to promote the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 53/25. The strategy for the Decade gave priority to both academic and informal education at all levels on a culture of peace and non-violence. In recent years, children caught up in situations of armed conflict had been both victims and perpetrators of violence; they had been uprooted from their homes, wounded or killed, orphaned, kidnapped, exploited and abused. It was therefore essential to continue efforts to prevent the participation of children in armed conflicts through active promotion of tolerance, dialogue and respect for cultural diversity.

19. **Mrs. G/Mariam** (Ethiopia) said that children were the pillars of a bright and prosperous future. No society could contemplate a successful future and sustained development without making children its priority. Children should be provided with the necessary health care and quality education, and be allowed to grow in harmony away from fear and anxiety. They should be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and conflicts. Special attention should be given to children from poor families and those in especially difficult circumstances, including children with disabilities.

20. The promotion and protection of children's rights formed the nucleus of Ethiopia's social development policies, and significant efforts had been made to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national laws and policies. Specific reference was made to children's rights in the Constitution; family law had been revised accordingly, and revision of the Penal Code was also under way. In addition, preparations were in progress for the adoption and ratification of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thanks to Ethiopia's efforts in the fields of education, social development, women's issues and health, including HIV/AIDS, tangible improvements had been made to the well-being of its children.

21. However, widespread poverty, lack of infrastructure, harmful traditional practices and customs and insufficient resources persisted. The Government had elaborated a National Poverty Eradication Strategy — recently approved by the World Bank — but substantial financial support from the international community was urgently required to assist national efforts. To ensure the survival, protection and development of children, there was need for total debt cancellation, sustained development assistance, fair terms of trade and improved foreign investment. A holistic approach to development must accordingly be emphasized in the draft final document of the special session.

22. **Ms. Šimonović** (Croatia) said that preparations for the special session had been instrumental in bringing children's issues to the forefront of the international agenda. The prolonged preparations should lead to an even stronger outcome document and plan of action that would make a real difference for children worldwide.

23. The special session would provide a unique opportunity to endorse the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a rights-based approach to the needs of children. She was pleased to announce that her Government would sign both the optional protocols to the Convention and had ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Much more needed to be done, however, to bridge the gap between international norms and their actual implementation at grass-roots level.

24. Mandates for restoring, maintaining and building peace should include special provisions on the protection of children. Croatia was still witnessing the effects of war on children; although the Government had provided a great deal of material assistance, the affected children still needed psychological care, which was being offered through country-wide counselling centres. A national human rights education programme in primary and secondary schools was also an integral part of the regular school curriculum. Civil society had played a major role in peace-building, with the participation of children as a critical element.

25. For the benefit of all children, the forthcoming special session must be successful. A "world fit for children" would not create itself; every member of the international community must ensure its realization.

26. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that children were the most vulnerable sector of society and their vulnerability increased in situations of extreme

poverty, violence and armed conflict, including foreign occupation. It was therefore necessary to ensure the full implementation of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. The special session on children would be an effective means of achieving that end.

27. Her delegation regretted the failure of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/56/453) to recognize the suffering of Palestinian children, and was concerned that the Secretariat increasingly appeared to be ignoring that important issue and the corresponding resolutions of the General Assembly. It wished to bring the Committee's attention to the ongoing, systematic denial and violation of the rights of Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation, which endangered their survival and impeded their development.

28. Since 28 September 2000, the situation on the ground had seriously deteriorated, worsening the already miserable living conditions of the Palestinian people, particularly the children. The Israeli military campaign had resulted in loss of life, serious injuries, the destruction of property and the restriction of the movement of persons and goods within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Many of the children affected would be permanently disabled owing to the severity of their injuries.

29. The measures taken by the occupying forces constituted violations of international humanitarian law, including the various conventions relating to children. Moreover, Israeli policies and actions were in grave violation of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which was applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. The international community should exert pressure on Israel to comply with those conventions in order to ensure the protection of Palestinian children.

30. **Mr. Petrič** (Slovenia) said that Slovenia supported all international efforts to ensure better living conditions for children worldwide. The special session on children would be a unique opportunity to evaluate awareness of the importance of safeguarding and nurturing children and to assume further commitments to that end.

31. The international community had made great efforts to remedy the plight of children affected by armed conflict. His Government had launched some important initiatives for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of such children in south-eastern Europe. In particular, it had established a regional centre for their psychosocial well-being, thus developing concepts linking psychosocial well-being to social rehabilitation and development.

32. Slovenia considered that social conciliation in the Balkans depended on the psychosocial profile of the younger generations, and hoped to create a framework for providing a comprehensive approach to protection and assistance for traumatized children. The Centre had been welcomed by the international community, and the collaboration of other countries and humanitarian or similar organizations was invited.

33. **Ms. Crowley** (Australia) said that the improvements in the lives of children over the decade since the adoption of the Convention and the World Summit for Children had been overshadowed, even negated, by their continued subjection to the worst forms of child labour, sexual and other abuse and exploitation and their involvement in armed conflict. The willingness of the international community to set new standards for the protection of children in critical areas — child labour, armed conflict and sexual exploitation — was encouraging, as was the work of UNICEF and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system. The development of further measures to improve the situation of children must take a central position on the international agenda.

34. In conclusion, she read out a message from the Australian youth delegates to the special session to the children of New York, offering their support and sympathy in response to the terrorist attack of 11 September.

35. **Mrs. Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that the events of 11 September had drastically changed the world and the expectations of children. In order to regain their confidence, the outcome document of the special session must be a realistic reflection of their hopes for a better future.

36. Suriname, a party to the Convention since 1995, was executing a national programme, in cooperation with UNICEF, with special emphasis on the situation of women and children in the interior of the country. It was also participating in the multi-country programme of cooperation involving countries of the Eastern Caribbean, Suriname and UNICEF.

37. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that there had been some success on the international level in implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children. The African countries, for their part, had held regional conferences, the most recent in Cairo, which had resulted in a declaration and plan of action presenting a common position on all questions concerning children. However, despite limited progress in some fields, Africa was the continent most severely impacted by problems affecting child survival, development and protection.

38. Guinea had drawn up a programme of action for children in 1992 and had submitted its national review in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/93. Despite the effects of globalization, poverty and instability in West Africa, it had established structures for the dissemination of the Convention. It had, inter alia, revitalized health care and education programmes and expanded immunization coverage. Thus, it was determined to become more actively involved in the global dialogue and activities for the survival, development and protection of children.

39. The end of the cold war, which had coincided with the global commitment to children, had given hope that resources previously allocated to arms would be redirected to social development, but that hope had not been fully realized. The progress mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report to the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session (A/S-27/3) was encouraging, and with the necessary political will, the goals set for children could be met.

40. **Ms. Gligorova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the time had come, after a decade of experience in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for all Member States to reaffirm their commitments to improve their promotion and protection of children's rights, and for every State, family, organization, individual, and society to do their utmost to attain the health, education, nutrition and other goals that would protect children from the many challenges of which they were the prime victims.

41. Despite many improvements at all levels, much clearly remained to be done to make the world fit for children. South-East Europe's bitter experience during the previous decade, including events in her own country, attested to the importance of full implementation of the Convention and its two optional protocols, both of which her Government had signed. It was currently bringing its domestic legislation into line with the Convention and would ensure that the latter was reflected in State policy and enforced in administrative practices. It had appointed an ombudsperson for children's rights and established a National Commission to implement its National Action Plan, as stipulated in the Convention.

42. The Committee's deliberations should focus on the eradication of poverty and the root causes of child rights violations and on the creation of an environment conducive to a happy childhood and children's full and free expression of their personalities and talents.

43. She stressed her delegation's support for the prompt convening of the postponed special session, in which Macedonia intended to participate actively. She hoped that the resolutions to be adopted by the Committee would spur the entire international community, and the United Nations in particular, to greater efforts in behalf of children and to ensure full respect for the rights enshrined in the Convention and its two optional protocols.

44. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) reaffirmed his country's abiding commitment to the abolition of child labour, but disagreed with the Secretary-General that progressive elimination of child labour was the key to poverty eradication. Poverty was the main cause of child labour, and the eradication of both evils should go hand in hand.

45. He was heartened to learn that many Member States had, like Pakistan, signed both optional protocols to the Convention, which, on coming into force, would significantly reduce child trafficking and prostitution and the involvement of children as both victims and soldiers in armed conflict. Ending the suffering of children in armed conflict called for a just and peaceful resolution of the long-standing conflicts raging in many parts of the world.

46. Safeguarding the institution of the family and strengthening the concept of joint parental guidance were vital for a healthy environment in which children could develop. Only a properly functioning family could provide such an environment, since lack of parental guidance and of kinship ties exposed children to negative influences and ultimately to crime.

47. Pakistan's commitment to children was enshrined in its Islamic identity and its Constitution. It remained fully committed to the goals of the World Summit for Children and to the implementation of the Plan of Action. Immediately following its ratification of the Convention in 1990, the Government had strengthened the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development and had assigned it the task of implementing the Convention; over the past decade, great strides had been made.

48. In the area of basic health and welfare, the Government had launched a number of programmes with specific goals for the 2000-2001 biennium, many of which had already been attained. Another priority was education for all, the thrust of which was to prepare children to meet the challenges of the new millennium, with the accent on science and technology, without neglecting the quality of education. Sadly, the enrolment of girls and rural children had not kept pace with improvements, and it was they too who most often dropped out of school. With regard to disabled children, an elaborate network of facilities, initiated with assistance from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, existed for all persons with disabilities. They were governed by the Disabled Persons Ordinance (1981) and supported by many non-governmental organizations and the National Trust for the Disabled.

49. The juvenile justice system was being reformed in accordance with the Convention. A recent law had raised the minimum age of applicability of capital punishment to 18, and provided protection from torture and inhuman treatment. Children enjoyed the same freedom of thought, conscience and religion as adults, as well as freedom of association and assembly. The thorny problem of child labour was being addressed by the Pakistani Government: it had brought the relevant legislation into line with the Convention and the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, had ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and was taking remedial action to rehabilitate working children.

50. Nations would be judged in future by the well-being of their children; in Pakistan the concept of the best interest of the child was reflected in all aspects of life. Despite its difficulties, the Government was determined to make the country and, in turn, the world fit for children.

51. **Mr. Abdul Jabar** (Malaysia) said that children's survival was constrained by poverty, lack of access to basic needs and services, and exposure to abuse, neglect and exploitation. His delegation was dismayed that in recent years children had been both targets and perpetrators of violence. Regarding the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Children to take political action to protect children from war, he entirely endorsed the Secretary-General's view that the best means was to prevent armed conflict at the outset; accordingly, he supported the Secretary-General's emphasis on a culture of peace and prevention.

52. Children in armed conflict should be assured of their physical safety and of protection under international law. In many such situations, not only were children and women targeted with impunity, but children were also forced to participate in armed conflicts in one capacity or another, in violation of their human rights. His delegation firmly believed that there should be no leniency or amnesty for crimes perpetrated on innocent children. By the same token, children who had fought because of their manipulation by adults deserved to be treated humanely.

53. His delegation vehemently condemned the use of rape as a deliberate weapon of war. It endorsed the Secretary-General's appeal for the continued prosecution of sexual violence against women and children as a war crime, and welcomed the fact that the Statute of the International Criminal Court designated rape as both a crime against humanity and a war crime.

54. He bewailed the fact that the plight of Palestinian children and of children under foreign occupation had been all but forgotten for lack of a political solution to the Middle East problem. Only if that problem was addressed could there be any meaningful discussion of the subject. He attributed that state of affairs to both the Security Council's paralysis with regard to that issue and the Special Representative's over-emphasis on armed conflict in Africa.

55. Sanctions, too, had a debilitating effect on children. It was shocking that, according to UNICEF, the lives of over one million children could have been saved but for the sanctions imposed on Iraq, where child and maternal mortality was currently among the highest in the world. His delegation called for the sanctions to be reviewed and lifted immediately. It also urged that, should sanctions become necessary as a measure of last resort, they should be imposed only

after a thorough assessment of their impact on civilians, especially children.

56. Malaysia, a party to the Convention, firmly supported its two protocols, and was gratified at the high ranking it had been given by UNICEF among the Asia-Pacific countries for its child welfare and development and its fulfilment of all the goals of the Convention. The Government's commitment to children had been enhanced by its establishment of the enabling environment manifest in its national plans. The Government worked closely with civil society, in accordance with the concept of shared responsibility initiated by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development.

57. While he applauded the emphasis placed on children's rights through open meetings of the Security Council on children affected by armed conflict, more importance should be attached to discussion of the issue in the Committee, as the organ competent to further the promotion and protection of children's rights and welfare.

58. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had been among the first to ratify the Convention, bec ıse that instrument established the groundwork foı .neeting children's basic needs and providing them with the conditions for a sound upbringing, all of which was emphasized in national plans and programmes. Despite lack of funds, the authorities were making sterling efforts to improve conditions for the care and development of children.

59. The Supreme Commission for Children, set up in 1991 to protect children and ensure that their needs were met, comprised representatives of various ministries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

60. She was extremely disappointed that neither the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Children (A/S-27/3) nor that of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/56/453) made any reference to children under foreign occupation, an omission that called their accuracy and objectivity into question.

61. The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967 negated all human rights, especially those of children; while Palestinian children were martyrs in the eyes of the world. Since children were the adults of the future, it was important for issues concerning them to be addressed without equivocation or double standards. In conclusion, Syria set great store by the success of the special session on children, which it hoped would assess implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Children.

62. **Ms. Ivanchenko** (Ukraine) said that, although attitudes towards children had changed for the better, millions of children continued to be exposed to forced labour, prostitution, slavery, HIV/AIDS and armed conflict. The international community must take prompt and concerted action at the highest levels to address such gross infringements of children's rights. Special attention must also be accorded to children living in extreme poverty. Resources devoted to meeting children's most basic needs were meagre by comparison to global expenditure on arms and luxuries. Even a very small level of support from wealthy companies would enable basic social services for children to be guaranteed.

63. In Ukraine, a range of legal mechanisms and national programmes were in place to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including a five-year plan of action. Collaboration with UNICEF was under way on projects for children with special needs. Efforts were also being made to reform State care institutions, strengthen child protection in all its dimensions and increase access to education and health facilities. Although the country had registered achievements in such areas, it was seriously challenged by an economy and society in transition. The transformations had had a particularly severe impact on the physical and psychological welfare of children. The number of orphans and of institutionalized, homeless, and delinquent children was only growing. Drug abuse among children and young people was a further problem, which only exacerbated the spread of HIV/AIDS.

64. The high incidence of cancer and other health disorders among children resulting from the Chernobyl disaster was a cause of particular concern to her delegation. With continuing advances in technology, the potential for further ecological disasters was increasing. It was thus vital to devise new strategies to manage such disasters and ensure the protection and development of children. It was evident from the current debate that each country and region had its own specific problems, but that most challenges were global in character.

65. **Mr. Helle** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that children affected by armed conflict required special attention, given their particular vulnerability. However, in order to ensure that they received adequate protection and assistance, it was also necessary to support their families and communities.

66. That approach was reflected in international humanitarian law, and responsibility for implementing that law lay mainly with States and with the parties to an armed conflict. In 2000, ICRC had launched a programme on international humanitarian law to teach young people and encourage reflection on dignity and humanity, the principles underlying that law. About 50 countries had committed themselves to integrating the material into their academic programmes and initial reaction to the course appeared to be promising.

67. The use of child soldiers was one of the most tragic aspects of contemporary conflicts. To address it effectively, efforts should focus both on prevention of recruitment and on demobilization and social rehabilitation. Each of those stages represented a complex challenge, requiring the involvement of multiple actors and institutions. ICRC had contributed to that far-reaching enterprise through their programmes in a number of war-affected countries, particularly in the fields of psychological and social rehabilitation of children affected by violence.

68. **Ms. Johnston** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that child labour was one of the most pernicious threats facing children today. ILO estimated that, throughout the world, some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 worked for a living; of those, over 50 million children under 11 worked in hazardous circumstances.

69. Child labour was neither valuable work experience nor an apprenticeship combined with schooling. It was abuse of power — exploitation of the young and vulnerable for profit. Its elimination had been a long-standing, major objective of ILO. Since 1919, ILO had adopted various conventions regulating working conditions for children, culminating in 1999 in the unanimous adoption of Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Since then, 100 States had ratified that instrument, which was the fastest rate of ratification for any ILO convention.

70. The rapid growth of ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour had paralleled the growth of the political movement against child labour. The programme was now operating in more than 70 countries, supported by 25 donors. Many countries expressly desired to eliminate all incidences of the worst forms of child labour over a short, defined period, which had prompted the development of "time-bound programmes", aimed at achieving that goal within 10 years. That initiative had been launched in the United Republic of Tanzania, El Salvador and Nepal.

71. In the wake of the horrific events of 11 September, the continuing plight of so many of the world's children should not be overlooked. The preparations for the special session on children would soon resume, and ILO would continue to assist in ensuring that commitments under existing instruments were fully reflected in all discussions. The ILO approach to child labour was firmly based on partnerships among all relevant sectors of society and it was working to eliminate child labour with thousands of partners throughout the world.

72. **Mr. Millo** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that children were the world's most precious possession and should be protected from sickness, poverty, violence, neglect and the horrors of war. To that end, it was particularly necessary to teach them moral values and instruct them in human rights, tolerance and democracy.

73. Children were especially vulnerable and should be sheltered from conflicts and political disputes. Urging them to participate in violence, using them as human shields during violent protests, training them to be holy warriors and glorifying martyrdom through educational programmes was immoral and illegal, under every code of law. The Palestinian leadership should be aware that children who resorted to violence would grow up in a society of terror. More than 95 per cent of Palestinians did not live under Israeli control; they already lived under the Palestinian Authority.

74. The death of any child was a tragedy and Israel deeply regretted casualties among innocent Palestinian civilians killed unintentionally in crossfire. For too many years, Israeli children had been victims of terrorism: they had been deliberately targeted by Palestinian snipers and suicide bombers, and slaughtered and stoned by terrorists. It was necessary to find a way of making the world free from terrorism and fit for children.

75. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by the representative of Israel was full of distortions. He claimed that the interests and education of children were a priority of the Israeli Government. The principal way to protect children, particularly Palestinian children, was to end the occupation.

76. Israel had repeated countless times that more than 95 per cent of Palestinians lived under the Palestinian Authority; but all of Palestine, including Jerusalem, was occupied territory, because there were Israeli tanks in Palestinian cities and villages throughout the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority, known as Area A.

77. In that regard, two days earlier, Israeli forces had occupied an area under the Palestinian Authority and seized the village of Beit Rima, using full military force. They had killed a number of Palestinians, injured many others and abducted several individuals. The exact number remained unclear because the Israeli occupying forces had cordoned off the village and, according to ICRC, had prevented ambulances from entering. That added an act of State terrorism to Israeli war crimes, despite all the calls for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from the areas that it had recently occupied.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*

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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 23rd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 29 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

## Contents

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

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01-60689 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

**Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/56/203, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/342-S/2001/852, A/56/453 and 488)

*Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*

1. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that he wished to underscore two points in his report on protection of children affected by armed conflict (A/56/453) as well as some of the activities to which he hoped the Committee would give particular attention.

2. First, the development of a research agenda on the impact of war on children was one of the more important activities undertaken over the past year. The objective was to provide more scientific and reliable information in order to inform and strengthen the action of all concerned. Second, the Office of the Special Representative, playing the role of catalyst and convener, had established several inter-agency working groups. They represented a significant way of seeking to integrate the agenda of war-affected children more systematically into the work of the United Nations and its external partners, and a means of improving collaboration — in particular, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

3. The latter had an important role to play and had collaborated with his Office in the development of various activities, in particular the innovative child-protection advisers. A collective review of the child-protection adviser experience in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been conducted by his Office, together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNICEF, in order to strengthen the role of the advisers and be able to replicate the experience in other countries.

4. There had been considerable discussion on the role of children under 18 years of age in connection with truth- and justice-seeking and processes. The issue of how to deal with children who had allegedly been engaged in activities relating to genocide had become critical in the case of Rwanda and Sierra Leone and would certainly arise in the case of Cambodia. A common approach was needed, both with regard to the participation of children as witnesses, and also concerning the appropriate way in which to hold accountable children under 18 who had allegedly committed atrocities.

5. The Office of the Special Representative had made the signature and ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict the subject of a systematic campaign, with the goal of obtaining the 10 ratifications necessary for the Protocol to enter into force before the special session of the General Assembly on children, re-scheduled for 2002. He therefore appealed to delegations to urge their Governments to ratify the Optional Protocol at the earliest possible date. In that regard, the Holy See was to be commended for having deposited its instrument of ratification and for using its network to advocate signature of the Protocol.

6. More needed to be done to move from the elaboration of norms and standards to putting them in place on the ground, as the gap between theory and practice was still too wide. He would be submitting to the Committee a very specific proposal to establish a more effective mechanism for monitoring the conduct of parties to armed conflicts, in order to make certain that they respected their obligation to ensure the protection and rehabilitation of war-affected children.

7. Recent events had underscored three issues: the vulnerability of the young to indoctrination; the alienation of young people from their own society; and the involvement of young people in armed conflicts because of those two factors. It was necessary to go beyond merely dealing with the effects of such involvement and to address the challenge of offering young people more positive, viable alternatives within society, so as to reduce their vulnerability.

8. The international development community had made a significant effort to reach out to local communities affected by war. However, a further effort was required in order to assist them and provide them with greater resources so as to increase their ability to protect their children, because the local communities were the real key to any sustainable strategy to rehabilitate war-affected children.

9. Lastly, he noted that the Security Council summit-level open debate on children and armed conflict based on the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/342-S/2001/852), originally scheduled for 19

September, had now been rescheduled for 20 November.

10. **Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein), referring to the truth-seeking process in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Cambodia, said that it would be interesting to have further information on the common approach that the Special Representative had mentioned. There was also the problem of children who were both victims and perpetrators, and it would be useful to know the Special Representative's views on that subject. The Committee considered that, in the case of serious crimes, it was important to hold all those involved accountable, while bearing in mind that, in the case of children who were perpetrators, they were also victims.

11. With regard to the gap between the standards and their implementation, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified by almost all the Member States, but the reality was bleak. It would be useful to know the Special Representative's point of view on the translation of the standards of children in armed conflict into Security Council resolutions — whether he felt that the concerns relating to children were addressed sufficiently in the action taken by the Security Council in specific situations, and whether he felt that the channels for his Office to have an input into the drafting of such resolutions were adequate.

12. **Ms. Al-Hajjaji** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the report of the Special Representative focused on certain areas of the world when dealing with the impact of armed conflict on children to the exclusion of others, and it would be interesting to know why it had only looked at countries such as Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and the Congo when there was armed conflict in many other areas of Africa.

13. Her delegation considered that children were not being forcibly recruited. They joined the armed conflict for other reasons, some of which were mentioned in both the report of the Secretary-General and that of the Special Representative: absence of work, lack of family ties, poverty and ill-understood ideologies. It would have been useful if the Special Representative had commented on the impact of the armed conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and on the pain inflicted on the children of Iraq and Afghanistan; those cases should be included in his next report.

14. The reports had not emphasized the special situation of girl children in armed conflict, in particular their vulnerability to sexual abuse. However, confirmation by the International Criminal Court that such crimes constituted crimes against humanity was a positive development.

15. Her delegation agreed that perpetrators of crimes who were under 15 years of age should receive special treatment; their punishment should be commuted to some form of community service ordered by the Court.

16. Noting that the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights had brought the issue of domestic violence and State violence against children to the attention of the General Assembly, her delegation wished to request the Secretary-General to study those issues and examine the impact of all kinds of intra-family violence against children.

17. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that, with regard to truth-seeking and judicial processes, his views were very similar to those of the representative of Liechtenstein. When children came before such processes as participants or witnesses, they were entitled to all the protection that juvenile justice required. The difficulties and nuances arose when children under 18 were accused of committing atrocities. Then, it had to be considered whether they should be allowed to go free without any blame, whether only certain acts should be punishable, or whether participation in the criminal act was forced or voluntary; accountability had to be balanced against victimhood. In Sierra Leone, most children under 18 who were alleged to have committed atrocities should go before the truth-seeking process, account for what had happened and then undergo rehabilitation. However, in specific, very egregious circumstances, some children of 16 or 17 who did not act under duress should be brought before the judicial tribunals and, if found guilty, subjected to various measures of rehabilitation. Children were always victims, but there had to be an increasing level of responsibility as children grew older.

18. The gap between international and local standards and practices was a major challenge for all actors. The evolving collaboration between his Office and the Security Council had been very fruitful, and the aim was to ensure that the Security Council considered how its resolutions should take into account the specific needs of children. Most recent reports of the Secretary-General and of Special Representatives in the field now contained a section on how specific events were

affecting children and what measures the Security Council should take to protect them. However, it was not the responsibility of the Security Council alone; all national Governments were responsible for protecting their own children, as were all United Nations agencies whose activities had an impact on children, together with civil society and national and international non-governmental organizations.

19. In response to the concern that his report appeared to focus only on some countries while ignoring others, he was trying to treat the issues thematically, by drawing on some experiences. However, his concern encompassed all children affected by armed conflict throughout the world.

20. He agreed on the critical role of indoctrination and ideologies, inspired by religion, ethnicity and socio-economic factors, that led to the participation of young people in armed conflict, but there was also a need to address the factors that alienated young people and made them easy prey to those who wished to manipulate them.

21. Lastly, with regard to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the killing and victimization of children was of special concern to his Office. As for children affected by the sanctions regime in Iraq, in previous reports he had referred specifically to that case and others, urging the Security Council and other entities responsible for sanctions to do more to ensure that children were not the most-affected parties, in particular with regard to their education, nutrition and health. To date, it had not been possible to target sanctions in such a way as to spare innocent children.

22. Responding to a question put by **Mr. Bhattacharajee** (India), he said that indoctrination was often used to foster a sense of alienation and enmity between ethnic or religious groups, creating a sense of "us" and "them"; conversely, alienation and social exclusion could be used as a basis for indoctrination, in order to draw children into conflict. The correlation between the concepts of alienation and indoctrination thus varied depending on the situation.

23. Addressing an issue raised by **Ms. Stevens** (Belgium), who had spoken on behalf of the European Union, he said that the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers must be factored into all programmes. Indeed, the demobilization of child soldiers represented a perfect opportunity for the international community to move from words to resources. There was an urgent need to provide capacity on the ground for the reintegration of demobilized child soldiers into their own communities, not least to enable families to feed the children on their return, to deal with the problem of alienation and to provide viable and attractive alternatives to ensure that the children did not return to the conflict. That meant engaging the children usefully, and providing schooling and vocational training. Local control of the process was essential.

24. He agreed with the representative of Belgium that it was vital to address the special needs of girls in any programme in view of their particular vulnerability in armed conflict, including in relation to HIV/AIDS. During his recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he had witnessed the procuring of girls by troops in the Kapala market outside Kisangani. Girls were doubly victimized, owing to the reticence of local communities surrounding the issue of sexual exploitation and the absence of programmes catering for girls' needs. The international community must address the correlation between the victimization of girls and the conduct of soldiers in conflict situations.

25. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), echoing the view expressed at a previous meeting by the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, said that the report of the Special Representative (A/56/453) showed evidence of selectivity in that it had yet again failed to mention the situation of children living under foreign occupation. Ignoring the problem would hardly help relieve the plight of such children.

26. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan), noting the expanded cooperation between the Office of the Special Representative and international non-governmental organizations, asked whether such partnerships also existed at the local level. Her delegation would also appreciate more details of the efforts being made to bring pressure to bear on parties to armed conflict in order to elicit compliance with child-protection commitments and obligations. In his report, the Special Representative had referred to the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in armed conflict; in future reports, he might also consider addressing the impact of other diseases such as malaria, and of malnutrition.

27. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), responding to the questions put to him, said that he could only repeat that the report was intended to be

thematic, not country-specific, and that his Office was concerned to protect the rights of all war-affected children in every conflict.

28. Local non-governmental organizations were consulted at every stage of his country visits, including during the preparation stage. Since his Office was not represented at country level, ongoing collaboration was conducted by United Nations country teams, particularly by UNICEF.

29. He would certainly welcome comments concerning the proposal he had mentioned earlier, to establish a more effective mechanism for monitoring the conduct of parties to armed conflicts. Such a mechanism was badly needed to make a difference to the lives of children on the ground. There was general agreement on principles; the details, however, had yet to be elaborated.

30. In his report (A/56/453), he had aimed to highlight the correlation between armed conflict and the spread of HIV/AIDS — an issue which had not received sufficient international attention. He had also, however, stressed the fact that hundreds of thousands of children suffered or died from severe malnutrition and preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and measles. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, some communities consisted entirely of older persons, whole generations of children having succumbed to the "conditions of war".

31. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin) requested details of the Special Representative's advocacy on behalf of children in the area of conflict-prevention.

32. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) joined with previous speakers in regretting that the reports before the Committee — like other reports prepared by the Secretariat — systematically ignored the plight of children living under foreign occupation. Although the issue had been addressed in United Nations resolutions, little attention was given to the implementation of those resolutions. In the previous year alone, over 200 Palestinian children had been killed at the hands of the occupying force. Palestinians could not even bring a single tin of milk into the territory without the approval of the Israeli authorities. The international community must not eschew its responsibilities in respect of Palestinian children.

33. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to resume its general discussion of agenda item 115.

34. **Mr. Baduri** (Eritrea) said that his Government had signed and ratified the Convention in 1994, within a year of becoming a sovereign State, and had translated it into all Eritrean languages to facilitate its dissemination. The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare had been entrusted with oversight of its implementation. The civil and penal codes had been amended to bring them into line with the Convention, including specific protections for girls through banning female genital mutilation and raising the minimum age of marriage to 18.

35. His delegation could easily relate to the problems of children in situations of armed conflict, since children in Eritrea had suffered during its struggle for independence. The recent border conflict with Ethiopia had marred the tremendous social and economic progress Eritrea had made during its first five years of independence. Meeting the special needs of children traumatized by war had proven to be a formidable task requiring sustained effort. If the goals of the Millennium Summit with regard to children were to be met, concerted global action to mobilize resources was needed. The forthcoming special session on children and the International Conference on Financing for Development should be seized as opportunities to make a global commitment to address the underlying problems, especially in the least developed countries.

36. **Mr. Al Anazi** (Kuwait) said that, in the interests of promoting greater tolerance and further development worldwide, it was important to emphasize the rights of children, as an indivisible part of human rights. Childhood being a crucial stage in the formation of the human character, serious efforts should be made to secure more effective investment in children. His country's attention to children stemmed from the principles enshrined in its Constitution, pursuant to which the family formed the basis of society and young people were afforded care by the State and protected from moral, physical and spiritual neglect. The law also safeguarded and strengthened the family, which in turn offered protection for both mothers and children.

37. Kuwait had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and continued to head the list of Arab States in the annual *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a fact which reflected the importance which it attached to development as a major factor for the advancement of young people. To that end, Kuwait had provided various services and programmes for

children, such as free education and health care, pioneering children's projects and children's cultural activities.

38. With regard to children affected by armed conflict, he commended the role of non-governmental organizations in the endeavour to eliminate the use of children in such conflicts. He also remained concerned by the absence of deterrents against the perpetration of crimes against children, as in the case of the Kuwaiti children deprived of contact with relatives still being held captive by the Iraqi regime. Children in the occupied Palestinian territory likewise suffered from the acts of violence perpetrated by Israeli forces in violation of all international instruments relating to children's rights. It was therefore time for the international community to channel its energies into ensuring compliance with those instruments in order to protect children and guarantee their secure future.

39. In conclusion, he said that Kuwait wished to re-emphasize the solidarity of its children with those of the United States of America and to express its sorrow over the events of 11 September, as a result of which the special session on children had been postponed. He looked forward, however, to the participation of the international community in that session with a view to the creation of a "world fit for children".

40. **Mr. Bhattacharjee** (India) said that there was no one reason for the chilling statistics on the welfare of children reported by UNICEF in its report, *The State of the World's Children 2001*, but if one factor was responsible more than any other, it was the dwindling resources available to developing countries to tackle a problem of such enormous proportions. During the past decade, while their share of global gross domestic product had continued to fall, globalization had limited the ability of their Governments to take independent or affirmative action, particularly in the social field. Global corporate capital had not come forth to supplement the shrinking capacity of Governments: there were no corporate "best practices" in the creation of schools, affordable health care or educational tools. Global partnerships had failed to evolve to meet that challenge.

41. The rights of children must be seen in an inter-generational context, and literacy, particularly from early childhood, was the key to an inter-generational approach. Despite scarce resources, a law was being enacted in India to make primary education compulsory and free.

42. India remained strongly committed to the eradication of all forms of child labour. Its National Human Rights Commission and legal system had been active on the issue, and it was participating in the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. While effective measures against child labour were being taken, however, children should not be forced into the more hazardous informal sector and risk more serious consequences. The Government had kept all related issues in view — developmental, social and legal — when attempting to tackle the problem.

43. His delegation appreciated the work of the Special Representative, and found his recommendations important. However, those who sought to promote their own agendas either through armed conflict or terrorism knew no rules. They used children, as they used others, without scruple. Obtaining from them commitments that could hardly be monitored, let alone enforced, could lull the international community into a false sense of security. Of course, there were no easy answers.

44. **Ms. Suñé Pascuet** (Andorra) said that her delegation remained committed to the negotiations on the draft outcome document of the special session, and hoped that the session would take place with the same level of youth representation as originally planned.

45. The special session on HIV/AIDS had highlighted the situation of the millions of children throughout the world who were either orphaned by the disease or themselves infected. Combating the epidemic should be a priority in coming months. Her Government had signed the two optional protocols to the Convention, and urged all countries to do likewise in order to bring those instruments into force.

46. Education, especially for girls, remained a major element in protecting children from exploitation and breaking the cycle of abuse. The Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children to be held in Yokohama, Japan, in December 2001, should provide new elements for analysis and action.

47. In conclusion, she noted that her Government would submit its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its next session, demonstrating its commitment to all matters relating to children.

48. **Mr. Priputen** (Slovakia) said his delegation called on States parties to the Convention to accept the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, increasing the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18, as a necessary step in providing the Committee with the capacity to handle the workload resulting from the near-universal ratification of the Convention.

49. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic provided numerous safeguards for children and youth, and its legislation underwent regular review to ensure that it protected the best interests of children. One important step had been the establishment of the Slovak Committee on the Rights of the Child, which served in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In addition to specific problems affecting children, that Committee was proposing a system for providing information to children on their rights and how to exercise them.

50. **Ms. Limpias Chávez** (Bolivia) said that, upon signing the Convention 11 years earlier, Bolivia had set out to develop a coherent policy for children. It was working to build a country where all children had access to education, adequate food, health care, sanitation and legal protection. Over 60 per cent of its children lived in conditions of extreme poverty, and recent statistics on child survival, school enrolment, abuse, abandonment and child labour gave a discouraging picture of their situation.

51. Poverty was an obstacle to meeting the needs of Bolivia's children, but it would not prevent her country from continuing to promote and protect their rights. There were no excuses to justify their violation. The Government had made it a priority to reverse the deterioration in the situation of children, and had made progress in the areas of nutrition in rural areas, free basic health-care programmes, educational reform which sought to embrace all ethnic groups, and programmes to increase school enrolment for girls in rural areas. Programmes were also aimed at reducing the high level of child abuse and eliminating child labour among 7- to 14-year-olds.

52. Her Government firmly believed in the value of international cooperation and solidarity, the work of non-governmental organizations and the involvement of civil society. Its cooperation with UNICEF in executing the national programme for children had been especially valuable.

53. **Mr. Mun Jong Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the problems facing children worldwide were most often due to poverty, social inequality and irresponsible actions by Governments. Throughout the past 50 years, however, his Government had made children's rights a priority. Despite economic hardships, its children received free medical care and 11 years of free and compulsory education, and enjoyed constitutional and legislative protection of their rights. UNICEF and other international organizations had provided valuable assistance in promoting the welfare of children in the aftermath of recent severe natural disasters in the country.

54. His Government had always paid particular attention to the education of new generations. In that regard, his delegation referred to recent attempts by the Government of Japan to teach its children a distorted version of history that depicted Japan's colonization of Korea as a "just cause" and falsified its history of aggression and exploitation as "development and assistance". It had also failed to mention its crimes against humanity, including the plundering of Korea's natural resources, the use of six million Koreans as slave labour, and the forced prostitution of the so-called "comfort women". Japan should stop those distortions of history and educate its children in a way that would contribute to the building of a peaceful and prosperous world.

55. The family played the most important role in the survival, development and protection of children, for which it must receive support. The negative impact of globalization on developing countries must be mitigated through poverty eradication and debt relief, in order to provide adequate means for the protection and education of their children. His Government would continue to meet all its national and international obligations to build a world fit for children.

56. **Ms. Setyawati** (Indonesia) said it was tragic that one of the issues which the Committee must discuss was children in armed conflict. Her delegation supported the call to all groups engaged in armed conflict to commit themselves to the child-protection standards contained in the Convention.

57. Children represented half the population of Indonesia, and the Government was working with the Parliament to adopt comprehensive legislation on child protection to facilitate implementation of the

Convention and its optional protocols, which it had recently signed, along with ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

58. The Declaration on the Commitments for Children of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had been adopted as a reaffirmation of its 1993 Plan of Action for Children. It recognized the importance of information-sharing on the rights of the child and the need to address child welfare in a holistic manner. ASEAN member States explicitly agreed to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, trafficking and exploitation, and from armed conflict and victimization.

59. In Indonesia, increasing threats to national stability and the financial crisis had, unfortunately, opened the door to violations of children's rights. Within its limited resources, it was continuing to work toward the goals of the World Summit for Children, including improvements in quality of and access to education, health care, nutrition and social services. National non-governmental organizations were protecting Indonesian children working in resort areas from sexual exploitation. Her delegation urged the World Tourism Organization and other related bodies to disseminate information and strengthen efforts to ensure compliance with the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. It also looked forward to the Second World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which should enhance cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations in combating child exploitation at national and international levels. In order to meet the needs of children during humanitarian emergencies, the Government had also established a National Commission for Refugees and Community Recovery.

60. Millions of children continued to die each year from preventable diseases and armed conflict. Likewise, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was unravelling decades of gains in child survival, protection and development. It was her delegation's hope that children would not continue to suffer. Indonesia would not allow its children to become yet another "lost generation".

61. **Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein) said that his Government was committed to high-level participation in the special session and to a firm, action-oriented outcome that must reflect the status of the Convention as the legal framework for action on behalf of children. Also, children should not be mere objects of multilateral and national efforts, but must themselves be involved in activities affecting them. In the light of the postponement of the special session, he welcomed the initiative to submit a merely procedural draft resolution for adoption by the Committee.

62. Liechtenstein had supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict since the inception of that office. The report of the Secretary-General (A/56/342-S/2001/852) was eloquent on the action still needed to alleviate the devastating consequences of armed conflict on children. It was to be hoped that the Security Council would issue a strong response based on the recommendations in that report.

63. Violence against children could manifest itself in many subtle ways, and should be denounced in strong language in the outcome document of the special session. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the more in-depth consideration given to the topic, especially the initiative of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Since many victims of violence subsequently became its perpetrators, to address that issue was to invest in the future. That obvious link must be borne in mind and a basis established for peaceful patterns of conflict resolution in a violence-free environment for children. He urged the United Nations to examine all aspects of the issue so that the pertinent action could be taken.

64. The time had come to implement the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, on HIV/AIDS, using a rights-based approach that should guide deliberations on outstanding issues in order to protect the growing number of children orphaned by the disease and to prevent its further propagation. It was vital for women and girls, who were particularly at risk, to decide freely on matters pertaining to their sexuality.

65. National and international education programmes should complement each other. Education was of the utmost importance for survival in a rapidly globalizing world and should continue throughout life; however, the picture for the vast majority of children was extremely bleak, lacking as they did access to the most basic primary education. As the key to poverty eradication, education was not only the right of every child; it was an investment in development and well-being.

66. **Ms. Thandar** (Myanmar) welcomed the achievements of the international community since the 1990 World Summit for Children, such as the quasi-universality of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, poverty, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and trafficking in children were among the remaining evils that needed to be addressed. In that connection, she was convinced that the adoption of the two optional protocols to the Convention would contribute to the protection of children.

67. Children's rights, at the top of the global agenda since the World Summit, were also high on Myanmar's agenda. Since its accession to the Convention it had steadfastly implemented a series of national plans on behalf of children, including enactment of the Child Law and the creation of a National Committee on the Rights of the Child to implement the Convention. It had also submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

68. The country's National Programme of Action and National Health Plan (1990-2001) were being implemented, and the Government was using its own resources, coupled with international assistance, to improve health care even in the country's remotest areas. Better basic child and maternal care, increased iodized-salt consumption, increased availability of drinking water, the vaccination programme for children under one year old, the polio-eradication programme and country-wide immunization had all improved children's health and reduced infant mortality. In programmes run by non-governmental organizations with government assistance, disabled children benefited from community-based rehabilitation, as well as special and integrated education, vocational training and, subsequently, job opportunities.

69. Education enjoyed high priority in Myanmar, and a vast array of programmes and projects were being implemented with the help of UNICEF, UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The percentages of girls and boys in primary and secondary education were almost identical, while women outnumbered men at university level. In addition to its numerous universities and colleges, there were distance-education universities, which used electronic data broadcasting, as well as hundreds of computerized education centres.

70. Contrary to some reports, the minimum age for enlistment had been 18 ever since the era of Myanmar's struggle for independence, although "armed children" still existed in some insurgent groups. After years of the insurgents' meaningless destruction of infrastructure, the current Government had reached unprecedented ceasefire agreements with many of them; since then, their leaders had been engaged in the constructive development of their regions with assistance from the Government. Destruction had been replaced by development, the sound of guns and mortars by the sound of school bells; and poppy fields were being replaced by fields of sugar cane and other crops. Only genuine concern and cooperation could provide a more peaceful life for children in border areas and support the authorities in their determination to replace every gun with a pen.

71. **Miss Durrant** (Jamaica) associated herself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Barbados, speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community. She said that the tragic events of 11 September had demonstrated in no uncertain terms that security was a precondition for securing a "world fit for children", many of whom had been orphaned or traumatized by those events. Such evils as terrorism, armed conflict and abuse compelled the international community to continue its efforts to assure them of a secure and peaceful environment.

72. The special session, postponed on account of that tragedy, would provide such an opportunity. In that connection, she extended her sincere appreciation to the Executive Director of UNICEF and her staff for their tremendous support to the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session, and called on all delegations to continue their cooperation to ensure that the outcome was in the best interest of every child.

73. Member States had an individual and collective responsibility to honour their commitments made during the World Summit for Children and at the Millennium Summit, and to set new targets to meet the emerging obstacles to children's capacity to realize their full potential. Using the Convention, its optional protocols and other international instruments as a starting-point, the international community must eradicate poverty, protect children from exploitation and guarantee them basic education and health care.

74. If it was to provide a world fit for children, the international community must ensure respect for

human rights, promote a culture of adherence to humanitarian norms with appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and ensure that violators of child-protection laws were brought to justice.

75. Her delegation welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, given the particular vulnerability of girls and the alarming proportions that sexual exploitation and trafficking in girls had assumed with globalization, as had the use of information and communication technologies for spreading child pornography. The early signing and ratification of that protocol would complement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and contribute to the prosecution of child-exploiters. Also in need of urgent attention were the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

76. In view of the negative impact of armed conflict on children, including their displacement and use as child soldiers, her delegation applauded the efforts of the Special Representative to secure commitments to increase attention to child protection on the international agenda, especially from parties to armed conflict. The Security Council must continue to address the plight of children in conflict situations and focus on child protection in United Nations peace operations, address the root causes of conflict and seek the best means of protecting children against its impact.

77. UNICEF's work was especially important for advancing the global child-protection agenda. Its role among internally displaced and refugee children and in post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation deserved special support, as did its focus on priority areas, including education for girls, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and greater protection of children from violence.

78. In conclusion, she said that national and international progress must be consolidated and used as a foundation for the special session on children, leading to the creation of a world fit for children.

79. **Mr. Gabay** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that certain delegations had used the general discussion of the protection of children's rights to politicize the debate and level criticism at Israel. Israeli children, too, were victims of terrorism. Delegation after delegation had taken issue with the absence of any mention of children under foreign occupation in the Special Representative's report, and had obviously not been satisfied by his replies.

80. Children in many regions suffered from the impact of armed conflict. However, the conflict in the Middle East had arisen from a situation imposed on Israel. He did not deny that children in the occupied territories suffered, but indoctrination would not alleviate their suffering, nor would inculcating in them a hatred of Jews or encouraging them to engage in bloody demonstrations organized by the Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah or Hamas. Their suffering might, however, be alleviated through basic education imparted in official schools. Their suffering was the direct consequence of the climate of terror prevailing in the region, which naturally led to armed responses, just as the Israeli delegation had been obliged to invoke the right of reply in the Committee in order to defend itself against attacks.

81. Tuesday, 11 September, had taught all the world about the horrors of terrorism, which Israel had known since its creation. Palestinians had been responsible for the first aeroplane hijackings as early as the 1960s, not to mention the attacks on Jewish centres, schools and embassies, hostage-taking and the explosion of "human bombs" among civilians.

82. He suggested that the Secretary-General should include in his next report the situation of children under the influence of terrorism, which was more than likely to escalate, and the physical and moral impact it had on their future and basic rights. Israel would never yield to terrorism. Only when Israeli children's passion for life had ended such violence would peace come to the Middle East.

83. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that if the name of the market in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, referred to by the Special Representative, was spelt like the city of Kampala in Uganda, it had been a gross misuse of imagination on the part of those responsible in their attempt to link such places to her country. She stressed that there was absolutely no connection between her country and that market.

84. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that his approach was similar to that expressed by the delegation of Benin, particularly with regard to conflict prevention. He had taken careful note of the

remarks made by the Observer for Palestine and the representative of Israel, although during the meeting, in response to remarks by other delegations, he had repeatedly stated his Office's approach and his own attitude to the issue.

85. Replying to the representative of Uganda, he said he was unaware of how the market had come by its name; he only knew that it was called Kampala and that girls there were used for sexual purposes by troops around Kisangani. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation of the delegations' comments and proposals, which would inform the work of the Special Representative. He looked forward to continued dialogue and collaboration with the Committee in the interest of children the world over.

86. **Mr. Roberfroid** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said he was gratified at the pace at which the ratification of the optional protocols to the Convention was progressing and at the interest generated by the forthcoming Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Some regional preparatory conferences to define strategies had already been held and others were to follow.

87. Several delegations had referred to street children and child labour, two issues which were directly linked to poverty and occupied an important place in UNICEF's action. UNICEF had long been implementing programmes for reintegrating street children into society and fervently supported the ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. One key to solving that problem lay in schooling for children, which called for reduced drop-out rates and for families' recognition of the importance of education, the main basis of UNICEF's action in the countries concerned.

88. With regard to the discussion held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2001 on violence at school, many delegations had welcomed that Committee's adoption of a recommendation to the General Assembly to authorize the Secretary-General to undertake an in-depth study on the protection of children against violence, a subject that would be a focus of UNICEF's future activities, especially its medium-term strategic plan.

89. In view of the myriad problems linked to the issue of children in armed conflict, UNICEF collaborated with the Special Representative and had already made significant progress in, for instance, developing education suited to emergency situations. It also actively supported the fight against impunity for those who committed heinous crimes against children, by participating in the preparatory work for the establishment of the International Criminal Court and by upholding the judicial processes in the countries concerned. UNICEF would continue to render that support, especially with regard to the monitoring network, which would allow the international community to document and report unacceptable behaviour towards children. He trusted that those issues would receive due attention at the special session on children now scheduled for 2002.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*